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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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The closest one was about 60 miles away, and the warnings were all over the news. Earlier in the week, Massachusetts was hit with at least three tornadoes in which at least four people were killed or died. Seeing these storms via videos from the public was unbelievable. Many homes and businesses were totally destroyed, and people's lives have been changed forever.

My wife and I were mesmerized and glued to the television watching all of the reports, weather maps, and pictures from the affected areas. Seeing a tornado rip houses apart and throwing cars around like they were toys was hard to comprehend. This was too close to home, in an area that rarely has tornadoes - much less one so devastating.

The stories of survival were also amazing. There were too many to recount here, but they were the tales you read about or see in movies. We're used to hearing about tornadoes in the Midwest because that area has been prone to such storms over the years, but in New England, rarely. Hopefully we won't incur such wrath of nature anytime again soon.

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Activision Bets on Online Play!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" PSN Restored in US & Europe!
What To Expect at E3 2011!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Activision Bets on Online Play for ’Call of Duty’

Activision knows it’s more fun to blast on-screen enemies into oblivion with friends, so this fall it’s launching an online service for its "Call of Duty" games that’s part Facebook, part player matchmaker and part organized sports.

It’s the logical next step for Activision Blizzard Inc., whose "Call of Duty" franchise has enjoyed unprecedented success. The latest title, "Black Ops," has sold 22 million copies worldwide since its November launch. More than 7 million people play every day online.

The service officially launches on Nov. 8 with the next "Call of Duty" installment, Activision said Tuesday. A test version will be available before that, but Activision isn’t saying when.

Two years in the making by a specially-created game studio called Beachhead, the service, "Call of Duty: Elite," lets players form groups, compete by skill level or interest, share statistics like baseball fans, and create video clips of their best "Call of Duty" moments, among other things.

"Elite" will be accessible from game consoles, computers and smartphones. It’s as if "social networks and organized sports had a baby and they gave that baby a flamethrower," as Activision puts it.

Eric Hirshberg, CEO of Activision Publishing, calls it a response to the rise of social networking.

"A way to think about this - the NFL used to be something you could only interact with on Sunday. Then, things like fantasy football and ESPN started surrounding it," Hirshberg said.

Online services are also the next step for the broader video game industry, which must figure out how to offer players experiences that go beyond the $60 video game discs that, "Call of Duty" aside, have seen bumpy sales as people flock to cheaper games from "Angry Birds" to "FarmVille."

Activision is not saying what it plans to charge for access to "Elite," though it’s likely to be in the form of monthly or yearly subscriptions possibly combined with the sale of virtual items and extra content for the games. Hirshberg stressed that the company won’t start charging for anything currently available to "Call of Duty" players for free, such as the ability to play multiplayer games.

Activision, whose Blizzard arm publishes the "World of Warcraft" online game series, is betting that the future of video games lies beyond discs in so-called "digital content." That includes everything from downloadable chapters (called "map packs") in "Call of Duty" to monthly "World of Warcraft" subscriptions, along with games on Facebook and mobile devices. While sales of physical video games are on the decline save the biggest blockbusters, more people than ever are playing games in some form, especially online and on mobile devices.

"Call of Duty" has a single-player component, but that pales in comparison with the enjoyment gamers like Dave Strand, 28, get out of playing the game’s multiplayer feature, which can extend the playtime of "Call of Duty" by days, weeks or even months. More than 30 million

people play "Call of Duty" online, proof that video games are no longer a solitary pastime.

"It’s always better to play with someone you know, have one friendly voice." said Strand, who works for a telecommunications company in Chicago. "As opposed to random kids who when they die they just scream in profanity."

Strand said he plays a couple of days a week, with a group of like-minded gamers, found through an online video game forum, who like to practice "good sportsmanship, win or lose."

As for a digital platform for "Call of Duty," Strand said if it was "like a buck or two a month, I’d think about it." He already pays for the Xbox Live online service which now costs $60 a year, and shells out $15 for each new "Call of Duty" map pack.

Sony PlayStation Network Restored in US, Europe

Sony Corp. is fully restoring its PlayStation Network in the U.S., Europe and parts of Asia on Thursday after hackers stole customer data and sent services offline in April.

The Tokyo-based company said in a statement that services are set to resume in the U.S., Europe and Asia, excluding Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Customers will also be able to download music again on their PlayStation3 consoles and PCs through Sony’s Qriocity music service.

Sony shut down the network after a massive security breach that affected more than 100 million online accounts and embarrassed the tech giant.

Sony said last week that credit card companies have not reported any rise in fraudulent credit card transactions as a result of the attack.

The network serves both the PlayStation video game machines and Sony’s Qriocity movie and music services. The system links gamers worldwide in live play, and also allows users to upgrade and download games and other content.

The company says it has added "considerable" security enhancements to protect customer data. It created a new "Chief Information Security Officer" position amid criticism that the company hadn’t been vigilant enough about online security.

The attack cost Sony 14 billion yen ($173 million), used to cover new identity theft insurance for customers, improvements to infrastructure, customer support and the investigation into the hacking.

Sony is also hoping to entice customers with a "Welcome Back" package of free game downloads and premium services.

The company began partially restoring the PlayStation Network in the U.S. and Europe on May 15, enabling online game play and account management.

Full restoration includes access to the PlayStation Store and in-game commerce, Sony said.

Sony did not specify a timeline for Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea, where local authorities continue to assess the company's security measures.

Spotlight Falls on Sony's Troubled Cybersecurity

Another massive data breach at Sony has left hackers exulting, customers steaming and security experts questioning why basic fixes haven't been made to the company's stricken cybersecurity program.

Hackers say they managed to steal a massive trove of personal information from Sony Pictures' website using a basic technique which they claim shows how poorly the company guards its users' secrets. Security experts agreed Friday, saying that the company's security was bypassed by a well-known attack method by which rogue commands are used to extract sensitive data from poorly-constructed websites.

"Any website worth its salt these days should be built to withstand such attacks," said Graham Cluley, of Web security firm Sophos. Coming on the heels of a massive security breach that compromised more than 100 million user accounts associated with Sony's PlayStation and online entertainment networks, Cluley said the latest attack suggested that hackers were lining up to give the company a kicking.

"They are becoming the whipping boy of the computer underground," he said.

Culver City, California-based Sony Pictures has so far declined to comment beyond saying that it is looking into the reported attack - which saw many users' names, home addresses, phone numbers, emails, and passwords posted on the Web.

It wasn't clear how many people were affected. The hackers, who call themselves Lulz Security - a reference to the Internetspeak for "laugh out loud" - boasted of compromising more than 1 million users' personal information - although it said that a lack of resources meant it could only leak a selection on the Web. Their claim could not be independently verified, but several people whose details were posted online confirmed their identities to The Associated Press.

Lulz Security ridiculed Sony for the ease with which it stole the data, saying that the company stored peoples' passwords in a simple text file - something it called "disgraceful and insecure."

Several emails sent to accounts associated with the hackers as well as messages posted to the microblogging site Twitter were not returned, but in one of its tweets Lulz Security expressed no remorse.

"Hey innocent people whose data we leaked: blame Sony," it said.

Sony's customers - many of whom had given the company their information for sweepstakes draws - appeared to agree.

Tim Rillahan, a 39-year-old computer instructor in Ohio, said he was extremely upset to find email address and password posted online for "the whole world to see."

"I have since been changing my passwords on every site that uses a login," he said in an email Friday. "Sony stored our passwords in plain text instead of encrypting the information. It shows little respect to us, their customers."

He and others complained that they had yet to hear from the company about the breach, news of which is nearly a day old.

John Bumgarner, the chief technology officer for the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit - a research group devoted to monitoring Internet threats - was emphatic when asked whether users' passwords could be left unencrypted.

"Never, never, never," he said. "Passwords should always be hashed. Some kind of encryption should be used."

Bumgarner, who's been critical of Sony's security in the past, said the company needed to take a hard look at how it safeguards its data.

"It's time for Sony to press reset button on their cybersecurity program before another incident occurs," he said.

What to Expect at E3 2011

This year's Electronic Entertainment Expo is shaping up to be a big one, with major hardware announcements expected from at least two of the three big names in console gaming and a ton of high-profile titles scheduled for the summer, fall, and holiday seasons.

First, there's the sure thing on the hardware front: Nintendo and its upcoming successor to the Wii. This is confirmed: Nintendo will be announcing a new home console at E3. This isn't confirmed: any and all details about the new home console at E3. Big N has kept the world successfully in the dark about the Wii 2 (or Wii HD, or Project CafØ, depending on who you read), to the point that the system could literally be anything. We don't know if it will be high-def, if it will have a new online service, if its controllers will have high-def touch screens (an actual rumor), nothing. OF course, that's why we'll be at Nintendo's press conference at the start of the show to report exactly what the company is launching as soon as the curtains are pulled.

Besides the new home console, Nintendo will be putting a lot of effort into building up enthusiasm for the 3DS. The 3D handheld launched last month, and so far it's seen only a small collection of 3DS games and little to no online services. Kid Icarus: Uprising, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, the upcoming, unnamed Super Mario Bros. game, and the 3DS eStore will all likely be shown off at the show.

Sony will almost certainly reveal more details surrounding its upcoming handheld system, codenamed the Next Generation Portable, or NGP. We already know it's going to be a fast, bright, shiny handheld that looks vaguely like the PlayStation Portable. It will have a 5-inch OLED touch screen, built-in 3G, and basically serve as a small gaming tablet with buttons. However, official price and availability aren't set in stone yet, nor are launch titles or upcoming major games for the system. Those details will likely get sorted out at E3.

On the home console front, Sony likely won't offer anything new. While the PlayStation 3 is as old as the Wii, its much more advanced graphics have kept it from experiencing much in the way of aging. Current PS3 titles look great, and Sony probably won't announce a replacement for the system for at least another year. The company has always been conservative with new console iterations, letting the previous generation go on as long as possible, even after new hardware launches, and there's plenty of life left in the PS3 yet.

That brings us to Microsoft, which doesn't have a handheld system in the market and whose home console is the oldest (six years, as of November 22) of the current generation. The Xbox 360 still makes a valiant effort at gaming and is a very solid competitor to the PS3 even now. However, the system has been around for some time, and with Nintendo presenting a new system already, it stands to gain much from getting in on the next generation of hardware. Just as the Xbox 360 launched a full year before the Wii and PlayStation 3, the Xbox 3/720/Next-Gen could come out a year before Sony. That year head-start the Xbox 360 enjoyed helped seal major market share for several years, and Microsoft might try to get that advantage once again, while it still has the chance.

Of course, hardware won't be the only highlight of E3. Expect plenty of news and previews about upcoming games planned all the way through next year. From Nintendo, series favorites Mario and Link will return in two yet-unnamed Mario Bros. projects and The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword on the Wii. The company will also show off the long-awaited return of "Kid Icarus" himself, Pit, in Kid Icarus: Uprising for the 3DS. We might also see a new Metroid game, either 3D and on the Wii or either 2D or 3D on the DS/3DS. After the poorly received Metroid: Other M, bounty hunter Samus Aran lost a lot of respect, and it will be interesting to see if Nintendo will attempt a mea culpa for the latest chapter.

Sega could stand out as the dark horse in the software field at E3. Sonic the Hedgehog has had a very, very bad time over the last decade, with the company trying repeatedly to rekindle the magic the blue speedster held in the 90's. With Sonic Generations on the 3DS, Sega might (emphasis on might) just do that. Fortunately, Sega doesn't pin all its hope on its old mascot; a new Shinobi game is in the works for the 3DS, and while the Thor video game was criticized heavily by most critics as a mediocre cash-in, Captain America: Super Soldier might be a surprise winner, like X-Men Origins: Wolverine was in 2009.

EA, as always, will be big at E3, with plenty of games across all genres on the way. The biggest titles are Battlefield 3 and Mass Effect 3. Battlefield 3 is the fifth (or 18th; the series is numbered oddly) in EA's series of multiplayer shooters, and is the only current contender to stand up against Activision's Modern Warfare 3 in the online modern combat arena. Mass Effect 3 is the final chapter in the critically acclaimed Mass Effect trilogy, and will involve series hero Commander Shepherd directly combating the timeless, massive threat of the Reapers and their crusade to cleanse the galaxy of all life. Besides those two big titles, keep an eye out for Alice: Madness Returns, the sequel to 2000's American McGee's Alice, racing game Need for Speed: The Run, and perennial blockbuster Madden NFL 12.

Speaking of Activision, Modern Warfare 3 will be the company's biggest title at E3, but it won't be the only game there. Adorable dragon Spyro returns in Spyro Adventures, and Spider-Man: Edge of Time takes Marvel's web-slinging mascot and partners him with his counterpart from the year

2099, Miguel O’Hara. Don’t expect much World of Warcraft, Starcraft 2, or Diablo 3 news from E3; Blizzard-Activision saves the Blizzard announcements for Blizzcon.

Among French publisher Ubisoft’s games at E3, Assassin’s Creed: Revelations is the standout title. While not specifically Assassin’s Creed III (that game is expected within the next year or two), AC:R will tie up the loose ends of series protagonists Altair and Ezio’s lives in a multigenerational adventure through Constantinople, presumably to make room for a new protagonist in a new age (after the 11th century of Altair and 15th century of Ezio) in Assassin’s Creed III. New Tom Clancy games, including news about the upcoming, Kinect-enabled Tom Clancy’s Ghost Recon: Future Soldier, are expected to be shown off, along with upcoming western crime game Call of Juarez: The Cartel.

Is that going to be it? Of course not! E3 will have dozens and dozens of publishers, developers, and manufacturers, all vying for press and consumer attention. Somewhere, tucked in a tiny booth in the Los Angeles Convention Center, could be the next super-smash puzzle-action-RPG-racing game hit to take the gaming world by storm. These are just the big shots and what we can be pretty sure will be at the expo. There’s plenty more to come

GameStop to Honor Duke Nukem: Forever Pre-Orders From 15 Years Ago

You did remember to save that receipt, right? Perhaps one of the industry s longest punchlines, Duke Nukem: Forever s constant delays certainly have become legendary over the last decade and a half. Now on the verge of June s arrival, Duke Nukem is finally going to see the light of store shelving.

So, were you one of the few who actually went to your local electronics store and put down the shiny $5.00 for a pre-order on Duke Nukem: Forever so long ago? Well, if you answered yes and you still have that receipt, we can agree that either you re a very meticulous person or you re just plain lucky.

GameStop announced late yesterday eve that it would honor pre-order receipts from 15 years ago, provided you still have that little slip of paper. The only stipulation is that you walk through those doors with that receipt before the game releases on June 14th. Doing so will still give you the "Duke s Big Package" deal, where you get an in-game EGO boost, a t-shirt, and the Big Head Mode.

Supposedly in two weeks, we ll see The Duke explode his way onto store shelves. Knowing you, you ve probably already found that receipt and are on your way out the door.

Right?

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Robinson’s Requiem Now Available for The Atari Jaguar

For immediate release:

ROCHESTER, MN - Songbird Productions is proud to announce the immediate availability of Robinson’s Requiem for the Atari Jaguar. In this enthralling 3D adventure, you play the part of a Robinson. The action unfolds in the middle of the twenty-second century, at a time when the Earth and some of its colonized planets are already over-populated. Robinson is the nickname given to members of AWE - Alien World Exploration - a military body whose task it is to explore totally unknown planets. Your last mission takes you to an uncharted planet where something goes horribly wrong. Now you must survive the harsh environment and somehow make your way... home.

Robinson’s Requiem features a fully explorable 3D environment encompassing three square miles of landscape, rendered and live-action video sequences, and Memory Track support for saved games. There are dozens of items to collect, use, and build as you ward off predators, illness, and adversaries. Your Sesame mini-computer tracks your health vitals and maps the area around you while you struggle to survive.

The end of a journey is just the beginning in Robinson’s Requiem! The professionally glass-mastered disc comes in a poly-wrapped Amaray case and includes a glossy 16-page manual. Order your copy today at http://songbird-productions.com.

Songbird Productions is a premier game developer and publisher for the Atari Lynx and Jaguar. To keep up to date with the latest news at Songbird Productions, be sure to visit the company web site at http://songbird-productions.com.

Order your copy today at http://songbird-productions.com! Special discounted price of $49.95 is only available through June 3rd, 2011, so help spread the word to other Jaguar fans! Post on Twitter, Facebook, VideoGameGeek.com, Atari.net, or other video game sites and share your support on the official thread at http://www.atariage.com/forums/topic/182663-robinsons-requiem-now-available-for-the-jaguar-cd.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Pentagon: All Options on Table in Cyber-Attack

The Pentagon said Tuesday that it would consider all options if the United States were hit by a cyber-attack as it develops the first military guidelines for the age of Internet warfare.

President Barack Obama’s administration has been formalizing rules on cyberspace amid growing concern about the reach of hackers. Major defense contractor Lockheed Martin said it repelled a major cyber-assault a week ago.

The White House on May 16 unveiled an international strategy on cyber-security which said the United States "will respond to hostile acts in cyberspace as we would to any other threat to our country."

"We reserve the right to use all necessary means - diplomatic, informational, military, and economic - as appropriate and consistent with applicable international law, in order to defend our nation, our allies, our partners and our interests," the strategy said.

Pentagon spokesman Colonel Dave Lapan said Tuesday that the White House policy did not rule out a military response to a cyber-attack.

"A response to a cyber incident or attack on the US would not necessarily be a cyber response," Lapan told reporters. "All appropriate options would be on the table if we were attacked, be it cyber."

Lapan said that the Pentagon was drawing up an accompanying cyber defense strategy which would be ready in two to three weeks.

The Wall Street Journal, citing three officials who said they had seen the document, reported Tuesday that the strategy would classify major cyber-attacks as acts of war, paving the way for possible military retaliation.

The newspaper said that the strategy was intended in part as a warning to foes that may try to sabotage the US electricity grid, subways or pipelines.

"If you shut down our power grid, maybe we will put a missile down one of your smokestacks," it quoted a military official as saying.

The newspaper said the Pentagon would likely decide whether to respond militarily to cyber-attacks based on the notion of "equivalence" - whether the attack was comparable in damage to a conventional military strike.

Such a decision would also depend on whether the precise source of the attack could be determined.

The US military suffered its worst cyber-attack in 2008. Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn said that a malicious flash drive - likely from a foreign spy agency - spread and commandeered computers at US Central Command, which runs the war in Afghanistan.

The attack served as a wakeup call, with the Pentagon setting up a Cyber Command and worked on guidelines for a new type of conflict.

In cyber-warfare, aggressors are often mysterious and hence would not fear immediate retaliation - a key theoretical framework in traditional warfare.

Wesley Clark, the retired US general who led NATO’s campaign in Kosovo, said the announcement of guidelines for cyber-conflict would serve as a deterrent to those who would consider such an attack.

"It may be that the best response is not to use force, but what this policy will say is that an attack is an attack and could be met by force. It is a matter first of deterrence," Clark told CNN.

While stepping up defenses, some believe the United States may also be pursuing cyber war. Iran has accused the United States and Israel of last year launching Stuxnet, a worm that reportedly wreaked havoc on computers in the Islamic republic’s controversial nuclear program.

The United States and Israel both declined to comment on Stuxnet.

Pentagon Doesn’t Rule Out Military Force Against Cyberattacks

The Pentagon is formulating a new strategy on how to respond to cyberattacks that would include using military force, a spokesman confirmed late Tuesday.

Col. David Lapan said if the attack is serious enough, "a response to a cyberincident or attack on the U.S. would not necessarily be a cyber response, so as I said all appropriate options would be on the table."

The final public portion of the "Defense Strategy for Operating in Cyberspace" is expected to be released in two or three weeks.

But much of it has already been discussed for months by numerous administration officials, including the White House and Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn.

In May, the White House released the International Strategy for Cyberspace. It said in part, "We reserve the right to use all necessary means - diplomatic, informational, military, and economic - as appropriate and consistent with applicable international law, in order to defend our Nation, our allies, our partners, and our interests."

The White House hopes this policy will act to discourage cyberattackers. "There is certainly the deterrent effect of letting our adversaries know how we would consider those actions and what steps we might take," Lapan said.

The Defense Department’s appreciation of the serious threat posed by cyberattacks grew substantially after an incident in 2008. That’s when someone inserted an infected flash drive (what some call thumb drives) into a U.S. military laptop on a base in the Middle East.

"The flash drive’s malicious computer code, placed there by a foreign intelligence agency, uploaded itself onto a network run by the U.S. Central Command. That code spread undetected on both classified and unclassified systems," Lynn wrote last fall in Foreign Policy magazine. "This previously classified incident was the most significant breach of U.S. military computers ever, and it served as an important wake-up call."

According to Lynn’s article, the code on that flash drive "spread undetected on both classified and unclassified systems, establishing

what amounted to a digital beachhead, from which data could be transferred to servers under foreign control."

But Lynn admits one of the more difficult hurdles facing anyone trying to respond to cyberattacks is figuring out who the attacker is.

"Whereas a missile comes with a return address, a computer virus generally does not. The forensic work necessary to identify an attacker may take months, if identification is possible at all," Lynn wrote. "And even when the attacker is identified, if it is a nonstate actor, such as a terrorist group, it may have no assets against which the United States can retaliate."

The Pentagon policy is part of the larger White House plan, but it will not include specifics as to what responses might be triggered by certain levels of cyberattacks.

"We're not going to necessarily lay out if this happens we will do this, because again the point is, if we are attacked we reserve the right to do any number of things in response just like we do now with kinetic attack," Lapan said. "So it makes the idea that attacks in cyber would be viewed in a way that attacks in a kinetic form are now, the military option is always a resort."

Syrian Networks Cut Off from Internet

Two-thirds of the networks in protest-wracked Syria were cut off from the Internet on Friday, an Internet monitoring firm said.

James Cowie of Renesys, a New Hampshire-based company that monitors Internet routing data in real-time, said in a blog post that beginning at 0335 GMT the routes to 40 of 59 networks became unreachable over the course of half an hour.

"The networks that are not reachable include, substantially, all of the prefixes reserved for SyriaTel's 3G mobile data networks, and smaller downstream ISPs (Internet Service Providers) including Sawa, INET, and Runnet," he said.

Cowie said the network prefixes that remain reachable include those belonging to the Syrian government "although many government websites are slow to respond or down."

"The Oil Ministry is up, for example, and Syrian Telecom's official page, but the Ministry of Education is down, as is the Damascus city government page, and the Syrian Customs website," he said.

A website maintained by Google, meanwhile, that monitors traffic to its popular services around the world showed traffic levels in Syria well below normal.

Cowie said the Internet in Syria basically depends on one domestic provider, state-owned SyriaTel, but "we don't know yet how the outage was coordinated, or what specific regions or cities may be affected more than others."

In Syria, residents said the Internet was down in Damascus and the

coastal city of Latakia on Friday.

According to the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Syrian security forces shot dead at least 34 demonstrators in the city of Hama on Friday as they dispersed an anti-regime rally of more than 50,000 people.

During anti-government protests in Egypt in January, the Egyptian authorities cut off access to the Internet in a move which Renesys described at the time as unprecedented. Service was restored several days later.

NY Rep. Weiner Hires Lawyer After Alleged Twitter Hacking

Democratic Representative Anthony Weiner has hired an attorney to investigate the hacking of his Twitter account after a lewd photo was sent to one of his followers, his office said on Tuesday.

"Look, this is a prank, not a terribly creative one and it’s a distraction," Weiner said on NY1 TV.

His office confirmed to Reuters that the New York congressman, who has a high profile as an advocate of liberal causes, has hired an attorney to advise him on whether or not he could press criminal charges as a result of the alleged hack of his Twitter account.

Weiner said his account was hacked when a lewd photo of a man in bulging boxer briefs was tweeted to a 21-year-old female college student in Washington state over the weekend.

The posting was quickly deleted and Weiner made light of the incident on his Twitter page.

"More Weiner Jokes for all my guests!" he tweeted with the hashtag "Hacked!"

The student, Gennette Cordova, issued a statement to the New York Daily News that denied she personally knew Weiner but said, "I am a fan."

She denounced rumors she was intimately involved with Weiner, who is married to Huma Abedin, a longtime aide to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"All of this is so outlandish that I don’t know whether to be pissed off or amused, quite frankly," Cordova said in the statement.

Steve Jobs To Deliver Apple Keynote Next Week

Apple Inc. CEO Steve Jobs will take a break from medical leave to deliver the keynote speech at next week’s Apple conference, the company said Tuesday.

The keynote will feature a new "iCloud" service, the company said. It didn’t explain what the service will do, but Apple has been in talks

with all four major recording companies on allowing users to store their songs on Apple-run servers rather than on their home PCs, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The person was not authorized to speak publicly on the deals and spoke recently on condition of anonymity.

Jobs went on medical leave in January for unspecified reasons, handing over day-to-day control to chief operating officer Tim Cook. Investors were rattled because Jobs is seen as the creative force behind the company, crucial to shaping hit products like the iPod, iPhone and iPad.

Even while on leave, Jobs has remained involved in larger decisions at the company, and demonstrated the new iPad model at a news conference in March.

Apple’s annual Worldwide Developers Conference kicks off Monday in San Francisco.

Jobs decision to appear at the conference indicates he believes iCloud will be another breakthrough service for Apple.

ICloud could give users a wide array of music for their iPhones, iPads and Wi-Fi-capable iPods, without having to connect them to their home PCs to transfer songs. Google Inc. and Amazon.com Inc. have recently launched similar services.

The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday, citing unnamed sources familiar with the matter, that iCloud would allow users to scan their home music collections and have it duplicated in the "cloud" of Apple-run computers. That would remove the time-consuming hassle of having to upload every song to the online storage locker.

Eliminating that hurdle would give iCloud a leg up over the comparable services from Google and Amazon.com, which requires uploads of existing song collections. Neither Google nor Amazon has secured deals with the recording companies.

It’s unclear how Apple intends to make money from the iCloud service, although a subscription plan seems likely.

Apple’s statement also said the keynote speech will feature Apple’s new Mac software, Lion, and the next version of Apple’s iPhone and iPad software.

The June developers’ conference has in years past been the opportunity for Apple to reveal the year’s new iPhone model, ahead of a retail launch a few weeks later. But this year, analysts are speculating that the new iPhone won’t arrive until the fall. Apple launched a version of the iPhone 4 for Verizon’s network in February, and a June-July release of a new model could disappoint new owners of that phone.

Tuesday’s brief statement did not mention any new hardware.

AMD Unveils Windows-Powered HD Tablet Platform

Advanced Micro Devices unveiled a new semiconductor platform for

Windows-based tablets Wednesday. Like its larger rival Intel, which announced its own Windows tablet platform Tuesday, AMD is pinning its hopes on Microsoft being able to make a comeback on the operating-system side of the tablet space currently dominated by Apple's iOS platform for the iPad, iPhone and iPod touch.

Though Windows-based tablets were unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show last January, those first-generation products were unable to gain market traction. Nevertheless, AMD and Intel believe the full Windows ecosystem will eventually give Microsoft the leverage it needs to make a winning tablet play.

The reality is that even the fast market responses with tablets using Google's Android have so far left the iPad unchallenged, noted Al Hilwa, director of applications development software at IDC. "There is probably nobody more experienced in building large hardware and software ecosystems today than Microsoft," Hilwa said. "So I have to believe that they will be successful in the long run at evolving the PC into new areas."

Featuring support for HTML5, Adobe Flash 10.2, and external monitors, AMD's new Windows-powered 2011 HD tablet platform is based on AMD's latest Z-series application processor. Code-named Desna, the new Fusion chip is equipped with dual one-gigahertz cores.

AMD's platform will give mobile workers full access to view, edit and collaborate on documents created in Microsoft Office and other business-related applications. What's more, it will support Microsoft Office across multiple devices via Windows Live. And to enable IT departments to safely offer tablets to their mobile workforces, AMD's offering also integrates enterprise-level security.

AMD's 2011 HD tablet platform also features full compatibility with the iPhone, Windows Phone 7, BlackBerry and other leading mobile devices. "By compatibility, we're referring to the fact that you can sync with these devices the way you can with your PC," said AMD spokesperson Phil Hughes.

Right now, AMD's strategy is to support Windows-based tablets, Hughes noted. "However, we are working with a company called BlueStacks that enables users to use some of their Android applications on a Windows tablet," he added. And as the tablet market matures, AMD said it will continue to expand its options.

Given the big bite that tablet sales took out of PC shipments in the first quarter, launching a successful tablet OS is a critical strategic move for Microsoft. Still, Microsoft is staying focused on Mango, the code name for the software giant's forthcoming update for Windows Phone 7.

More developers than ever are interested in creating apps for Microsoft's mobile platform now that smartphone giant Nokia plans to introduce a series of Windows Phone 7-powered devices, Hilwa said. Meanwhile, Microsoft is working to ensure that when it unveils Windows 8 later this year it includes capabilities to make it an attractive tablet alternative to Apple's iOS. "It's important for Microsoft to get its formula right," Hilwa said.

The big question Microsoft faces is how to best engage the hardware ecosystem to get high-quality products to market quickly - and with an entirely new software model that has to excite new developers and ISVs, Hilwa observed.

"If anything, the extra time has only made it clearer to the large body of professional developers - which IDC counts at about 15 million worldwide - [that they need] to come to terms with the transforming software models we are now facing," Hilwa said.

Microsoft Demos New Windows ’8’ for Tablets, PCs

Microsoft Corp. demonstrated its new operating system at the D: All Things Digital conference on Wednesday, a full version of Windows that will operate on tablets and personal computers.

For now, it’s called "Windows 8." Executives said that as mobile devices have gotten more powerful, they are able to run the full version of Windows.

The operating system is "touch first," which means it responds to finger swipes like other tablets, but will also respond to keyboards and mouses if they are attached. The home screen consists of various blocks of applications and looks like the Windows Phone interface.

Executives said more details would be unveiled at its developers conference in September. They did not give a release date, but said the operating system would not be released this fall.

Windows 8 Will Work With Existing PCs

Microsoft says Windows 7 users won’t need bigger and better hardware to run the freshly unveiled Windows 8.

The PC system requirements will be the same if not less than what’s needed to run Windows 7, although the new operating system definitely appears tailored for the touch-screen interfaces of tablets.

Speaking at a press event at Computex in Taiwan yesterday, Microsoft’s Michael Angiulo said, "Windows 8 will be able to run on a wide range of machines because it will have the same system requirements or lower" as Windows 7. Microsoft Windows President Steven Sinofsky reiterated the approach at the All Things D conference in California.

While current PC owners won’t need to upgrade, Windows 8 appears to be heavily skewed toward tablets and their touch screens. As evident in PCMag’s walk-through of Windows 8 , the interface borrows from Microsoft’s Windows Phone 7 OS for smartphones, with tiles and apps optimized for touch. If you’re using a regular desktop or laptop, however, you’ll still be able to navigate with a mouse and arrow keys rather than swipes and pinches.

In addition to having the same requirements as Windows 7, Windows 8 will run legacy Windows 7 applications. Clearly, Microsoft has learned the lessons of the troubled life of Windows Vista, which was had compatibility issues with existing systems when it was released. Many businesses never upgraded to Vista because of its troubles, preferring to stick with Windows XP. By ensuring that current PCs will run Windows 8, it should speed adoption of the new OS when it’s released to the

public.

With Windows 8, Microsoft appears to have crafted a single OS that can run on both PCs and tablets and their respective Intel-x86 and ARM chip architectures. Whether such an approach is more successful than creating completely different OSes for tablets - as Apple and Google have done - won't be known until 2012, the tentative release date for Windows 8.

Apple Updates Mac OS X To Battle Malware Threats

Responding to a widespread fake antivirus program targeted at Macs, Apple released Tuesday an update that will warn users and remove the threat. The update is available for Macs running Snow Leopard Mac OS X 10.6, as well as Mac OS X Server 10.6.

In its Security Update 2011-003, Apple said the update, available via Software Update or from Apple Downloads, refreshes the malware definition on File Quarantine to include MAC Defender, the fake antivirus malware, and provides for automatic, daily updating of known definitions. Automatic updating can be disabled by the user. The update also removes MAC Defender and known variants if the malware has already been installed, and an alert will notify the user of that action.

Reports on the web Wednesday indicated that malware makers have already circumvented Apple's update by changing the name of the malware file to mdinstall.pkg. The move could be short-lived if Apple adds the file name to its new daily update of malware definitions.

Apple said files downloaded via Safari, iChat or Mail are checked against a list of known malware that includes viruses, worms, Trojan horses, and other malicious software. If a file is found to be on the list, the Mac OS X update displays a dialog prompting the user to move it to the trash. The list is stored on the computer and, with the update, refreshed daily.

For years, Macs have enjoyed the reputation that they weren't susceptible to the many kinds of malicious software that have plagued Windows machines, because of the inherent strength of Mac OS X. Many observers have also argued that, because the installed base of Macs was so small, it wasn't worth the effort for a self-respecting hacker.

Chris Christensen, an analyst with IDC, said the myth of the Mac's invulnerability to hacking attacks "still largely stands in public perception," although they were "never technically invulnerable." Rather, he said, it was because their installed base was too small, but now the Mac's usage, transactional functions, and larger installed base present a tempting target to attackers.

Christensen added that he has to "give Apple credit" for its quick response to this vulnerability.

According to Mac security firm Intego, MAC Defender targets Mac users primarily through "SEO poisoning attacks," in which web sites with malicious code use search-optimization tricks to rank at the top of search results. A user who clicks on a malicious search result is sent to a web site that shows a fake screen and a fake malware scan, after which it tells the user that the computer is infected.

JavaScript on the page automatically downloads a compressed ZIP file. If the user has been using Safari and the "open safe after downloading" option in Safari is enabled, the file is unzipped and the user is presented with an installer window for which the user's administrative password is required.

If the user proceeds with installation, MAC Defender launches. Intego describes the application as "very well designed," with a professional look, a number of different screens, attractive buttons, and correct spelling.

Once installed, MAC Defender indicates the computer is infected and opens web pages for pornographic sites every few minutes. To counter the "virus," the user is prompted to buy MAC Defender's "antivirus" protection service.

After a credit-card number has been entered into a license-purchasing page, the virus warnings stop. But there is no service, and the user has just given the malware authors his or her credit-card information.

Intego recommends not installing the application to begin with, of course, and to uncheck the "open safe" option in Safari or other browsers.

A variant of MAC Defender, called MacGuard, has also been reported. It's placed in a user's Applications folder - which doesn't require an administrator's password - instead of the normal location in the system-level folder.

If a user has set Safari to automatically launch downloaded files - the "open safe after downloading" option - the malware's installer will launch. If not, users will see a downloaded ZIP archive and may double-click on it to find what's in it, which leads to the installer.

Web Users Worry About Snooping Businesses

It's not Big Brother, but "big business" that Internet users are more worried about.

A new survey found that nearly half of Internet-connected Americans age 16 and older worry about businesses checking what they do online. By comparison, 38 percent worry about the government doing so.

Not that those concerns are stopping people from using the Internet for shopping, social networking and a smattering of other activities.

The latest study from the Center for the Digital Future at the University of Southern California found that 82 percent of Americans use the Internet, the same as in 2009.

On average, they spend more than 18 hours a week online - for browsing the Web (79 percent), for banking (47 percent) and for social networking and video-sharing (46 percent).

In the decade that the Digital Future researchers have been tracking Americans' Internet use, social networks were born, and many of them all but died (anyone remember Friendster?). People have gotten used to

migrating more of their activities online and accessing the Internet from more devices than ever.

"When we started our work 11 years ago, the Internet was almost completely PC-based. We used to compare it with TV," said Jeffrey Cole, director of the Center for the Digital Future.

People would use the Internet - dial-up service, back then - the way they watched TV: sitting down in front of the screen for 30, 60 minutes at a time.

Not any more.

"We think PCs are slowly going away" except for the heaviest users, such as those using it for computer-assisted design, editing or heavy writing, Cole said. "Wireless, mobile Internet is becoming the Internet for most people."

Among other findings in the survey, conducted from April 27 to Aug. 30, 2010:

* Of the 18 percent of Americans who are not using the Internet, 7 percent cited cost as a reason. A quarter said they don't go online because they don't find it useful or have no interest. And 37 percent said they didn't have a computer or Internet connection.

* 21 percent of non-users said they were excluded from communications among their friends and disadvantaged in obtaining information for work, studies or hobbies as a result of not going online. Still, 66 percent of them said they are not likely to go online within the next year.

* 68 percent of adult Internet users go shopping online. Books and gifts are the most popular categories, followed by clothes and travel.

* People are still worried about privacy when shopping online, though fewer respondents said they were very concerned or extremely concerned than the year before: 48 percent compared with 54 percent in 2009.

* Email is still nearly universal. Even the texting generation uses this somewhat antiquated method of communication: 98 percent of Internet users under 17 said they email, compared with 95 percent of those aged 18 to 24. The lowest level of email usage, 94 percent, was among 45 to 54-year-olds.

The latest survey of 1,926 people aged 12 and older has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.2 percentage points.

A separate survey, from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, found recently that 13 percent of adult Internet users have used Twitter, up from 8 percent in November 2010. A higher percentage of African Americans and Latinos use Twitter than white people - 25 percent, 19 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

The Pew survey was conducted April 26 to May 22 among 2,277 adults and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.

Burglary Victim Remotely Controls His Stolen Laptop To Photograph Thief - and Then Hands Image to Police Who Arrest Him

A designer who had his laptop stolen helped police by using a spy camera programme to take pictures and catch the thief red-handed.

Joshua Kaufman thought he had lost his Apple MacBook when a thief broke into his apartment and stole the computer in March.

And with police giving his burglary report a low priority, he was resigned to never recovering the expensive laptop until he remembered the software he had installed on his MacBook.

Using 'Hidden' software, he remotely took pictures of the thief using his stolen computer - before handing the evidence to police to make an arrest.

Mr Kaufman captured the thief in a variety of bizarre locations - including using the stolen MacBook in bed, and in his car.

'Hidden' also provided him with location information, which police in Oakland, California, used to identify the thief as a taxi driver.

Officers then caught the thief by arranging for a 'pick up' from his car firm and arresting the man when he appeared in person.

Mr Kaufman said he started using the software once he realised his laptop had been stolen when the thief got into his apartment through an open window on Monday, March 21.

He also lost a Kindle and some jewellery stuffed into a computer bag.

A few days after activating the program he started receiving pictures revealing the hapless thief in action.

Mr Kaufman said: 'The following Thursday I started getting images and location information.

'I was amazed. I was, like, this thing actually works!'

The thief was captured using Mr Kaufman's computer to browse Middle Eastern music videos, changing the laptop's account information and even typing a password to get on Facebook.

Joshua Kaufman was able to track down his stolen MacBook thanks to a security application called Hidden.

Hidden is a theft tracking application for the Mac operating system

After installing the Hidden software, it lies dormant on the computer until the user goes to the Hidden website to report it stolen, activating the tracking software.

It can not only take pictures of the thief using the built-in webcam, but also send screenshots of the computer in use, internet history and the machine's location plotted on Google maps.

Hidden's makers boast that their software works worldwide, so whether the computer is stolen in London, New York or Buenos Aires, its owner can track it down and get it back.

To get the most out of hidden, the developers recommend setting up and enabling a separate password-free guest account.

This runs contrary to the usual computer security advice, but it makes sense with Hidden. The thief must actually be able to use the computer so the software can gather the information it needs to track it.

With all the information captured, all that remains to be done is to call in the police.

But his one-man investigation hit an obstacle when police told him they didn’t have the resources to follow up his complaint - despite him telling officers exactly where the thief was.

It was only when he created a blog - ’This Guy Has My MacBook’ - which generated support from thousands on the internet, that police were forced to revisit the case and eventually catch the thief.

Mr Kaufmanadded: ’I was excited, honestly - it feels like the power of the Internet is on my side.

’They (Oakland Police department) said, we’re really sorry you fell through the cracks.’

Mr Kaufmansaid he was told by Holly Joshi, OPD’s director of public relations: ’We have about 2,400 theft reports that come in per month, and three theft investigators.’

After two months of ignoring Mr Kaufman’s information, Oakland Police finally nabbed the thief on Tuesday night after he was caught on camera.

Hetweeted shortly after: ’ARRESTED! An Oakland police officer just called me to let me know that they arrested the guy in my photos! BOOYA!’

Later, he tweeted: ’This just in: MacBook acquired by the OPD! The officer was so kind on the phone: "It’s these kinds of partnerships that make things happen".’

Boy Regrets Selling His Kidney To Buy iPad

A 17-year-old student in Anhui Province sold one of his kidneys for 20,000 yuan only to buy an iPad 2. Now, with his health getting worse, the boy is feeling regret but it is too late, the Global Times reported today.

"I wanted to buy an iPad 2 but could not afford it," said the boy surnamed Zheng in Huaishan City. "A broker contacted me on the Internet and said he could help me sell one kidney for 20,000 yuan."

On April 28 Zheng went to Chenzhou City in neighboring Hunan Province for the kidney removal surgery arranged by the broker. His parents knew nothing about it, Zheng said. He was paid 22,000 yuan after his right kidney was taken out at the Chenzhou No. 198 Hospital.

When he returned home, his mother found out and reported to the police immediately. But they could not locate the broker whose cell phone was always powered off, the report said.

It turned out that the Chenzhou No. 198 Hospital was not qualified to perform organ transplant. The hospital claimed they had no idea about Zheng's surgery because the department that did the surgery had been contracted to a Fujian businessman.

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